



North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Priority Points

August 27, 2012

Welcome!

As the 2012-13 school year gets underway, our team at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) looks forward to working with each of you as you undertake, or in the case of our School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools continue, the important work of school reform.

As you know, seventy-seven Priority Schools have been identified under the North Carolina Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request.

The methodologies utilized in the identification of schools for Priority status are as follows:

- Schools are identified when the reading and math composite score (students proficient in both subjects) drops below 50% for the most recent year and one of the two prior years.
- Secondary schools are identified when the graduation rate drops below 60% for the most recent year and one of the two prior years.
- Schools previously identified as School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools are also included, although significant gains may have occurred in the SIG School and the school may not meet either of the above conditions. SIG schools were included in order to assist LEAs and schools in sustaining initiatives that were implemented via the grant.

Our SIG schools in North Carolina are providing us with great models of reform and we look forward to sharing these success stories with our “new” Priority Schools recently identified. In the coming year, you have great challenges ahead, but great opportunity as well, and we look forward to working hand in hand with you to provide the very best for our students.

North Carolina Indistar

NC Indistar - Indistar® is a web-based system implemented by a state education agency, district, or charter school organization for use with district and/or school improvement teams to inform, coach, sustain, track, and report improvement activities. The system was created by the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII), a national content center supported by the U.S. Department of Education.

Based on the feedback provided by our SIG schools last year (a pilot year for Indistar in NC), we have worked to align the required indicators with other reform efforts and school improvement planning processes that schools in NC are currently undertaking. These include both Race to the Top (RttT) initiatives/reform models and Title I Schoolwide Planning. This alignment has occurred while also reducing the number of required indicators.



Schools returning to Indistar this year will note that our partners at CII have provided great technical assistance in making the “Dashboard” more user-friendly. Changes include access to a “File Cabinet” for document/data storage, as well as graphical upgrades that will assist our teams and process managers in navigating the tool.

All Priority Schools will utilize NC Indistar to address 28 NC Key Indicators aligned to the ESEA Turnaround Principles and SIG/RttT reform models (Turnaround/Transformation). To assist with this work, we have asked each LEA to identify a district coordinator/liaison to work closely with the established School Implementation Team in the Priority School(s). The team will work to address each of the key indicators and to ensure that required reports are submitted within the tool. *(Note: A number of our LEAs with Priority Schools have requested additional information regarding the selection of a Priority School Coordinator. Attached, please find the document “Priority School Coordinator”, which provides a sample of the responsibilities pertaining to this role.)*

All “new” Priority Schools (non-SIG) will be participating in Indistar training on September 6th and 7th. A “refresher” webinar will be held on September 21st, and repeated on October 5th, for returning SIG schools. Also, many LEAs/schools have requested individualized training and support regarding NC Indistar, and we encourage you to pursue this is an option. If you would like to request an NC Indistar session, please contact Diane Antolak at diane.antolak@dpi.nc.gov.

Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Process (CCIP)

The North Carolina Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Process (CCIP) is the online grants management tool that houses the Consolidated Application process for LEAs in North Carolina. The Consolidated Application includes Title I (Part A and Part C – Migrant Education), as well as grants for Rural and Low-Income Schools, and Small Rural Schools Achievement. Additionally, CCIP houses the grant details for Title I School Improvement 1003(a) funds. These funds are administered under Program Report Code (PRC 105) in NC and LEAs with newly identified Priority Schools may access these funds to support the implementation of interventions aligned with the ESEA Turnaround Principles, or to implement interventions aligned with a SIG reform model. *(Note: SIG schools will have access to PRC 105 funds after the 3-year grant cycle under SIG is completed.)*

Key points to remember for our non-SIG Priority Schools/LEAs in 2012-13:

- LEAs with identified Priority Schools must establish plan relationships within CCIP to identify goals/action steps for each of the required ESEA Turnaround Principles.
- LEAs may apply for School Improvement 1003(a) funds – Program Report Code (PRC) 105 – on behalf of their Priority Schools.
- LEAs may set-aside additional funds from Title I, Part A to serve Title I identified Priority Schools and may also choose to serve Title I eligible secondary schools out of rank order if necessary to fully implement interventions.



Applications within CCIP undergo both a technical and quality review prior to approval and Title I consultants are working to complete these reviews as soon as possible. Applications are reviewed in the order received and we encourage you to contact George Hancock (George.hancock@dpi.nc.gov), or your assigned Title I Consultant, if you have any question regarding CCIP.

Priority School Quality Reviews

Priority School Quality Reviews (PSQRs) are on-site visits conducted by DPI to evaluate the implementation of interventions in each Priority School. Each visit may include a review of qualitative data through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations. LEAs may also be asked to participate in fiscal reviews regarding the use of SIG funds, Title I, and/or PRC 105 funds in Priority Schools.

The DPI reviewer will work with the LEA coordinator to establish a schedule for the visit(s). Upon completion of each visit, the reviewer will provide the DPI coordinator with a copy of the completed Priority School Quality Review (PSQR) form, including both comments and recommendations. The PSQR will then be forwarded to the LEA/School contact for review. Please note the Protocol provided below.

In the coming weeks, the LEA Priority School Coordinator will be contacted by one of our DPI Quality Review team members. Team members for 2012-13 include: George Hancock, Donna Brown, Diane Antolak, Charlotte Hughes, Elsie Leak, and Bill McGrady.

PSQR PROTOCOL	
Prior to the visit, the DPI Quality Reviewer will:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide an agenda to the LEA/School Contact• Review NC Indistar progress for the Priority School	
During the Visit, the Reviewer will:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a Principal/LEA Interview - Application “walk” – using either the SIG Renewal Application or the PRC 105 Grant Details• Review ESEA Principles or SIG Model Components as needed• Review Priority School documentation (see checklist)• Discuss NC Indistar progress• Review the School Improvement budget – (PRCs 105, 117, or 143)• Tour school/2-3 informal classroom walk-throughs (10-15 minutes each)• Provide Closure: Identify areas of concern/strengths from the LEA perspective	
Following the visit, the Reviewer will:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit on-site documentation form to DPI Coordinator• Provide “Coaching Comments” as needed in NC Indistar	



Priority School Documentation Checklist

The following items may be reviewed during the on-site visit to provide substantial evidence that programs are operated in compliance with applicable federal requirements. Please have documents clearly labeled as indicated for each item below:

- Quality Staffing - Administrator Evaluation(s), Teacher Evaluations, Professional Growth Plans, Action Plans
- Quality Planning - EVAAS/Benchmark Data, PLC Notes, Sampling of Lesson Plans, School Improvement Plan (SIP), SIP Team Minutes/Agendas, Professional Development Plans, Student Support Team Agendas/Minutes, Parent Advisory/PTA
- Quality Budgeting - Budget reports for all applicable PRCs (Title I - PRC 050, PRC 105, PRC 117, and/or PRC 143)

Priority School Advisory

Six educators have been appointed to the Priority School Advisory for 2012-13:

- Ron Thompson, Executive Director, Federal and State Compliance, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools;
- Dan Gilfort, Principal, Durham Performance Learning Center;
- Judy Leahy, SIG Coordinator, Gaston County Schools;
- Alana Hix, Executive Director of Federal Programs, Cumberland County Schools;
- Tonya Faison, Principal, Goldsboro High School; and
- Cedric Gerald, Instructional Coach, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Advisory members will continue to advise in the development of state Priority School policies and procedures and will offer ongoing feedback regarding state monitoring and support efforts.

Web Resources

- The United States Department of Education has re-launched the School Turnaround Learning Community (<http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/>). The site features improved chat and search functions and a user-friendly reorganization of resources, aimed at allowing state, district, school, and community leaders to discuss innovative strategies and share promising practices. To date, the site has some 4,300 members, offers over 500 school turnaround resources, and has hosted nearly 60 webinars on critical topics, including early learning, increased learning time, teacher and leader effectiveness, family and community engagement, and supporting secondary and rural schools.
- The School Improvement Grants website is available within the Federal Program Monitoring Section site located at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/grants/>. SIG Applications and summary information by school/LEA is available at the site, as well as Non-Regulatory Guidance from the US Department of Education (USED).

****For additional information regarding Priority Schools in North Carolina, please contact [George Hancock](#) at 919-807-3911 or [Donna Brown](#) at 919-807-3957.**